

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES LESSON PLAN

TITLE

ONCE UPON A TIME: How to create a story of your own

TOPIC

A brief excursus through some story genres, their main characters and settings, suitable nouns and verbs, and some possible openings and closings.

TYPE OF SCHOOL AND STUDENTS' AGE, TIMING AND PHASES

First year students of a *liceo linguistico*. First term: November-December. Three lessons of approximately one hour each.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Rather a class equipped with a computer, an overhead projector, and an Internet connection, or the language laboratory (with a projector as well).

LEARNING AIMS

This set of lessons is mainly aimed at making students create a story of their own, through a path which is designed to provide them with some steps to be followed in order to produce their own final learning object. At the end of the third lesson students should be able to identify the four story genres studied up to then, in terms of main features: characters, settings, verbs, nouns, openings and closings.

TOOLS CHOSEN (Hardware & Software, Web 2.0 tools, Online Resources, etc.)

The base tool chosen for this activity is a PowerPoint presentation, whose pictures have been all taken from the web site www.storybird.com, which is also the tool I used to create my own story (as an example to be shown to the students).

Towards the end of the presentation, I added a link to the Storybird tutorial video, downloading it from the software '4K Video Downloader'. Then I also created two buttons, one with the link to my story directly to storybird.com, and a second one (in case of not having an Internet connection in the class) with the link to my story on a new PowerPoint Presentation. In order to do so, I opened my story in full screen display, then I pressed the 'Stamp R Sist' button on my PC keyboard (for each page), afterwards I copied it and then printed it on Paint (and finally inserted it in a new ppt presentation).

METHODOLOGY AND TEACHING PROCEDURES

The three lessons designed to bring students to the creation of a story of their own need to be based on some fundamental pre-requisites. As a matter of fact, stories are usually told in the past form, so that it's necessary to revise the past forms studied up to then: Simple Past and Past Continuous.

Moreover, students need to revise how to describe people from both the physical point of view and the character, as to be able to describe the protagonists they'll choose for their story.

The first lesson will start with a warm-up phase, which is always very important in order to make students feel at ease and self confident with the foreign language and with the teacher too, as well as to motivate them and capture their attention. A suitable warm-up in this case could be a discussion about our favourite stories when we were children (both the students and the teacher). Otherwise, it would be interesting to enter the class and start reading a story, making the students guess the title.

At this point it's time to get closer to the topic at the core, which could be introduced with a question like: "Have you ever thought about creating a story of your own?". The provocative question would allow the teacher to start the PowerPoint Presentation that, as already said, will go through four story genres more in detail, showing for each genre some typical characters and settings. A short list of nouns and verbs will be provided as well, in order to give the students some ideas for their stories.

Towards the end of the presentation students will be shown a tutorial video on how to create a story on the website 'storybird.com', and after that they'll see the sample story invented by their teacher.

The second lesson will be a kind of workshop, during which students, divided into couples, will create their own stories with 'storybird'. They will be previously told to bring their own computers for that class, unless it's possible to use the language laboratory. Students will work independently, asking for the teacher's help whenever needed. The activity will last the whole second hour.

The third and last hour, on the other hand, will be entirely dedicated to each couple's presentation of the stories they created. Each couple will have to be able to comment upon the choices they made, in terms of genre, characters, settings and the like, so as to share with the rest of the class the way they worked, and the things they learnt.

A final oral mark will be given to each single student.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

What the TEACHER does	What (individual) STUDENTS or GROUP OF STUDENTS do
<p>The teacher leads the activities, above all in the initial, warm-up phase and, of course, during the power point presentation. Nonetheless, she tries to make students interact, asking them questions, sharing personal experiences, making them suggest extra words apart from those listed in the ppt presentation.</p> <p>Before showing each slide written part, the teacher invites the students to focus on the images, describing them through already known vocabulary.</p> <p>After the vision of the tutorial storybird</p>	<p>Students are supposed to interact a bit with the teacher, at least answering her questions during the warm-up phase and later on. They should feel free to share their personal experiences as concerning the stories they were told when they were children.</p> <p>During the ppt presentation, students take notes, ask questions related to any difficult or new word, but they also cooperate with the teacher answering her questions about things they already know, such as the colours used in some slides, describing some pictures, and the like.</p> <p>The core of their active part in the project is what we've called the 'workshop class', where students, divided into couples, and with a computer each, freely express their creativity trying out the website just discovered. It is very</p>

<p>video, the teacher herself shows the students how to create a very easy story using that tool (as the video might not be clear to everybody). During the 'workshop phase', that's to say when students work to the creation of an original story divided into couples, the teacher walks around the desks, ready to intervene whenever students need help.</p> <p>During the pairs presentations, the teacher decides whether to make some questions to help students explain the way they worked.</p> <p>Throughout each performance the teacher writes down strong and weak points for each student, so as to be able to give a mark each at the end of the lesson.</p>	<p>important in this phase that students cooperate in order to share ideas and come to a final product the two of them will be proud of.</p>
--	--

ASSESSMENT (weak and strong points, learning added value)

<p>I've started teaching English this year, so I have already explained past forms, such as the Simple Past and the Past Continuous in a first high school class, but I must admit I couldn't think of such an amazing website as Storybird to motivate my students, make them work in the front line.</p> <p>I must also admit this was my very first Powerpoint, and this is probably the reason why it took me so long to prepare it. The very strong point of this tool is actually that it allows many different schemes, in terms of colours, animations and the like, which makes you build an original work, giving space to your creativity. On the other hand, it must be said that it's a time-consuming job, and unfortunately it's not always possible to spend hours to prepare ppt presentations for our lessons. In my opinion, the importance of sharing material and resources with our colleagues is crucial in this very sense, as it would mean to equally divide the amount of work among us. In point of fact, I think it's desirable and possible to create some ppt presentations throughout the whole school year, so that after some first years of teaching, we could rely on already well done ones, to be used as helpful resources.</p> <p>But why is it so important to spend so much time to prepare presentations for our students?</p> <p>The answer clearly appeared to me during the teaching training programme I'm attending at school. As a matter of fact, having the possibility to sit among students, I could observe everything from a different perspective, that of students themselves. This means that each time my tutor teacher projected something on the screen, most of times it was a ppt presentation, I personally felt much more captured by what she said. Following written words on the screen helps students so much taking notes and better understand. It surely makes classes more interesting and varied.</p> <p>Coming back to the weak points of my learning object itself, I think it would have been much better to create a video tutorial of my own, both because the one I downloaded is dedicated to teachers (in a couple of sentences the speaker addresses teachers, and not students), and because it's not so easy for students of a first high-school year to understand every single word the recorded voice says.</p> <p>However, I really trust the three lessons designed this way will succeed, because I truly enjoyed myself in creating my own story, so will my students.</p> <p>Next year I'll surely put it into practice to see if it works, and to check if at the end students will actually be able to create a story of their own.</p>
--